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Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 11487 220449Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 /019 W
----------071398 220453Z /13
P R 220337Z AUG 78
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2810
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SREF
SUBJ: MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG TO MACAU

REF: (A) GENEVA 12633 AND (B) GENEVA 12721

1. THERE ARE THREE BUILDINGS IN MACAU WHICH ARE AVAILABLE FOR REFUGEES AT PRESENT TIME. AS FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, NONE OF THEM NEED RENOVATION OR ALTERATION BEFORE THEY COULD BE USED BY REFUGEES. ONE BUILDING IS FORMER ARMY SERGEANTS'S MESS, MADE AVAILABLE BY MACAU GOVT AND WHICH COULD ACCOMMODATE APPROXIMATELY 200. ANOTHER IS RELIGIOUS RETREAT HOUSE WITH CAPACITY FOR AT LEAST 300 REFUGEES. BUILDING BEING USED NOW IS CASA BENEFICIADES, FORMER OLD PEOPLE'S HOME, WHICH COULD TAKE 1,000 REFUGEES. AS STATE 206673 INDICATED, THERE ARE OTHER POTENTIAL SITES IN MACAU, WHICH IF MADE AVAILABLE, COULD ACCOMMODATE SOME THOUSANDS MORE.

2. REFERENCE TO RENOVATION OR ALTERATION MAY PERTAIN TO CASA BENEFICIADES, WHERE PARTIONS ARE ABEING BUILT TO GIVE MORE PRIVACY TO REFUGEE FAMILES. MACAU SOCIAL WELFARE DEPT SUGGESTED THIS AND CARPENTER AGREED TO PROVIDE REIMBURSEMENT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOCIAL WELFARE DEPT HAS SPENT 58,000 MACAU PATACAS (APPROXIMATELY $11,000) AND FINAL BILL COULD BE HIGHER. CARPENTER
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PAGE 02 HONG K 11487 220449Z

ASKED MACAU DIRECTRO OF CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICE (CRS) IF HE COULD PAY PART OF THIS. CRS DIRECTOR AGREED AND BELIEVES HE CAN RAISE 30,000 PATACAS.

3. CARPENTER TOLD US BEGINNING LAST WEEK THAT HE WAS PLANNING TO MOVE 150 REFUGEES FROM HONG KONG TO MACAU IN BATCHES OF 50 EACH. LATER IN WEEK HE CALLED

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

TO REPORT THAT MORE WAS OFF FOR TIME BEING. HE HAD
BEEN TOLD BY CRS DIRECTOR THAT ACTING GOVERNOR OF
MACAU HAD INVOLVED HIMSELF IN REFUGEES SITUATION
AND DECREED A STOP TO USE OF MACAU AS A TRANSIT SITE.
CARPENTER SAID THAT PART OF THE PROBLEM APPARENTLY
STEMMED FROM LACK OF UNHCR REIMBURSEMTN TO DEPT OF
SOCIAL WELFARE. HE NOTED THAT HE HAD JUST PAID JULY
CARE AND MAINTENANCE BILL AND WITH REGARD TO PARTIONS,
HE WAS TRYING TO SAVE MONEY BY HAVING CRS PAY PART
OF COSTS. UNITL HE WAS INFORMED HOW MUCH CRS COULD
RAISE, HE COULD NOT REIMBURSE DEPT OF SOCIAL WELFARE
FOR REST OF ITS EXPEDITURES.

4. CRS DIRCTOR INFORMED US THAT ACTING GOVERNOR DOES
NOT GET ALONG WITH GOVERNOR OR UNDERSECRETARY FOR SOCIAL
WELFARE. WHEN BOTH WERE ABSENT FROM MACAU, HE CLAIMED
HE HAD NOT BEEN INFORMED OF USE OF MACAU AS TRANSIT
SITE AND SEIZED UPON EXPENDITURES TO UPSET MATTERS.
GOVERNOR HAS RETURNED TO MACAU AND WILL BE VISITED
BY CRS DIRCTOR WHO IS CONFIDENT THAT MATTER CAN BE
SMOOTHED OVER QUIELTY NEXT SEVERAL DAYS. ACTING
GOVERNOR IS BEING TRANSFERRED TO PORTUGAL AND WILL
DEPART MACAU ON SEPT 2. THERE IS LESS GOVT COORDINATION
IN MACAU THAN USUAL SINCE GOVERNOR WILL STEP DOWN
IN NOVEMBER AND PORTUGUESE OFFICIALS ARE BEGINNING
TO LOOK FOR NEW ASSIGNMENTS.
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5. WHEN WE TOLD CAPRENTER THAT WE BELIEVE MATTER WILL BE
STRAIGHTENED OUT THIS WEEK AND THAT MOVEMENT CAN BE
PLANNED AGAIN, HOPEFULLY FOR NEXT WEEK, HE SAID CRS
DIRECTOR WILL VISIT HIM END THIS WEEK FOR DISUCSSION.
HE NOTED THAT WITH 33 NEW REFUGEE ARRIVALS IN MACAU
THIS PAST WEEKEND NUMBER TO BE TRANSFERRED HAS TO BE
DECREASED FROM 150 SINCE MACAU WILL ACCOMMODATE ONLY
400 REFUGEES. THERE ARE NOW 284 DIRECT REFUGEE
ARRIVALS IN MACAU. WHEN WE NOTED THAT UNDERSECRETARY
INCREASED NUMBER ORALLY TO 600, CAPRENTER REPLIED HE
WOULD NEED TOHAVE THAT IN WRITING.

6. WITH REGARD TO LETTER MENTIONED REFTEL (B) CRS DIRECTOR
APPARENTLY INTENDED TO WRITE TO CARPENTER ABOUT ACTION
OF ACTING GOVERNOR. HOWEVER, SINCE HE BELIEVES THAT
MATTER CAN BE STRAIGHTENED OUT THIS WEEK, HE DOES NOT
INTEND TO WRITE TO CARPENTER BUT TO VISIT HIM END
THIS WEEK FOR DISCUSSION. AS NOTED ABOVE, 33 REFUGEES
ARRIVED DIRECTLY THIS PAST WEEKEND AND WERE GRANTED
TEMPORARY ASYLUM UNDER NORMAL UNHCR GUARANTEE.

Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014

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7.CARPENTER REPORTED THAT HE WAS ABLE FURTHER REDUCE DAILY HOTEL RATE FRO REFUGEES IN HONG KONG FROM *7.35 TO $7.14 HE ALSO SAID HE IS IN PROCESS ACQUIRING VACANT HOUSE IN KOWLOON WHICH HE OPES TO RUN AS HOSTEL UNDER DIRECTION OF HONG KONG CHRISITAN SERVICES AT MUCH LESS EXPENSE THAN HOTEL TYPE ACCOMOMODATION.

8. COMMENT: WE FIND LATEST DEVELOPMENTS DISCOURAGING. IF THERE HAD BEEN VIGOR ON PART OF UNHCR IN PURSUING MACAU OFFER, ACTING GOVERNOR MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO STEP UYTO AND EXPLIT VOID. WE EXPECT MACAU GOVERNOR WILL INSTRUCT CRS DIRECTOR TO PROCEED AS PLANNED, AND WE HOPE THAT TRANSFER WILL TAKE PLACE THIS MONTH. ASIDE FROM SIGNIFICANT COST SAVINGS
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IN TRANSFERRING REFUGEES TO MACAU, HONG KONG GOVT WANTS TO SEE MOVEMENT TO MACAU AS MEANS OF RELIEVING REFUGEE BUILD-UP HERE AND SHOWING SOME MOVEMENT OF REFUGEES OUT OF HONG KONG.
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